

as poor as a church mouse, and marriage would have been out of the question but for the money.

"You must take it, Tom," insisted the girl. "Take it as a loan, if you like, to help you in your profession. You will have clients galore in a few years. Don't make us both unhappy by refusing, Tom."

Before Tom Claflin had decided Jim Maine produced a will written by the old woman a month before she died, and signed by witnesses. It left all Miss Martha's money to him, stating that, on account of her ingratitude, Annie was to get only the cottage. That was worth two or three thousand—but it was only a small share in the comfortable estate.

Tom came to Annie. "That will is a forgery, my dear," he said. "Those witnesses are men who owe Maine money. They are in his power, and are of disreputable character. We shall fight it tooth and nail."

Annie protested. She did not want to fight about the money, she said. Maine was welcome to it. And she hated scandal. Besides that, she knew her aunt had borne her no love.

But Tom persuaded her. He knew that the girl's life had been an unhappy one, though she had never told him so. He knew that the will was forged. And he meant to send Maine to prison.

The case came up before the surrogate's court. Maine had defied and threatened Tom, but the young lawyer saw that the man was in a frenzy of fear. Still, he could not keep his fingers off the nine thousand dollars. And his witnesses were staunch to him.

On the day before the trial the young lawyer received a visit from a fellow lawyer in the next town.

"I heard about your case, Claflin," he said. "I think this puts a new light on the transaction, doesn't it?" And he threw a document upon the table. Tom picked it up. It was another will of Miss Martha's.

"She made that about a month

ago," said the visitor. "Come over to Stapleton to do it, I guess, so that nobody in this town should know. Of course, it antedates the will you are fighting over, but—"

Claflin sat long in thought that evening.

"Tom, won't you withdraw at the last moment?" pleaded Annie in court the next morning. "Dear, we have the cottage—and, after all, that will may be genuine."

Tom said nothing but clasped her hand in his. And Annie resigned herself to her lover's will in the matter.

When the case was called, however, he amazed the court and spectators by saying:

"We do not accept this will as genuine, Your Honor, but, in deference to the wishes of my client we are willing to accept the sworn statement of Mr. Maine and his witness to the effect that the will is genuine, and to withdraw."

And the will was admitted to probate.

Maine was flushed with triumph. He was not the man to let well enough alone. The revulsion from his fears of prison proved too strong for his good sense. He came up to Tom in the court room, after the court had adjourned.

"Wall," he sneered, "I guess you did the wise thing in withdrawing, young man. You'd have lost your case, and I'd have had you driven out of town, too. It takes a big man to cross my will."

"I hope you'll enjoy your property," said Tom. "But why didn't you take the cottage, too, while you were about it? You threw away two or three thousand dollars there. And you might just as well have had it if you had had the nerve."

"What do you mean?" bellowed Maine truculently.

"I mean," said Tom, thrusting his face forward and looking the other squarely in the eye, "that if you hadn't been a thief and a rogue you would have got everything. Here is